

(February 13, 2009) Lipinski: I Voted 'Present' Out Of Principle

[WASHINGTON, D.C.] Congressman Dan Lipinski (IL-3) today issued the following statement regarding his vote on the Conference Report for H.R. 1, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

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"I voted 'present' out of principle - the principle that this \$787 billion compromise stimulus plan doesn't do enough to create good-paying jobs for struggling American families. We need to be working to create American jobs for American workers, but this bill fell short of what we could have done. My vote was to send a message that we need to do more.

"Let me be clear, I strongly believe that we need to have an economic stimulus bill. I applaud President Obama for pushing for an economic stimulus bill that was timely, temporary, and targeted. But this compromise bill just doesn't do enough to create good-paying jobs.

"For over a year, I have been calling for a stimulus package that creates good paying jobs for hard working Americans through a substantial investment in our nation's transportation infrastructure. We need to put people to work by rebuilding our nation's roads and bridges, rail infrastructure, and mass transit systems. This bill doesn't invest enough in those projects. I will not stand in the way of this bill moving forward, but I could not sign my name to a bill that I do not believe does enough to put Americans back to work.

"Every \$1 billion invested in infrastructure creates and supports 47,500 good paying American jobs. Yet the proposal we voted on today has only about 5 percent dedicated to transportation funding. That's far less than is needed to create jobs and turn around our struggling economy.

I worked hard to try to fix this problem and increase overall funding for transportation and infrastructure projects. I worked with my colleagues to write and pass an amendment to add \$3 billion for mass transit funding when the bill was in the House of Representatives. That funding and more was cut in the final compromise package, and that hurts Illinois.

"Illinois takes a \$200 million hit in transit funding. That's \$200 million less for transit agencies like CTA, Metra, and Pace. That's \$200 million less for the countless number of Chicagoland commuters who ride transit each and every day.

"While we were successful in our fight to include 'Buy American' in this compromise bill, it doesn't do enough to make sure more of the \$787 billion stimulus bill is spent here in America. We need to make sure we create American jobs in America, not Chinese jobs in China. American manufacturing jobs are being exported to China, India, and Pakistan. We need to do more to make sure this unprecedented investment is spent at home on American products made by American workers. I led an effort to include a strong 'Buy American' provision in this legislation. I was joined by over 50 of my colleagues in asking House leadership to include this important measure. While we were successful in strengthening the 'Buy American' provision in this bill, the final compromise doesn't go far enough.

"I wanted to send a message with my 'present' vote that more is needed. I wanted to send a message that this compromise bill just doesn't do enough. I am already working with my colleagues in the House and Senate to put together a manufacturing stimulus package. And we need to move quickly to reauthorize a \$286.5 billion multi-year highway and transit funding measure that runs out at the end of September. With my seat on the powerful House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I am fighting for a robust funding level in the next highway and transit funding bill that will boost the economy and create good-paying jobs by fixing our roads, bridges, rail, and public transit.

"I am hopeful that this bill works to turn around our economy. But I am going to continue to fight to do more, because I believe it is going to take more to get Americans back to work and get our economy growing again."